



HEADQUARTERS
ALASKAN COMMAND (ALCOM)
ELMENDORF AIR FORCE BASE, ALASKA 99506-2100

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17 APR 2006

Ms. Victoria Rutson
Chief, Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
Washington, DC 20423

Dear Ms. Rutson

This letter responds to your letter of March 1, 2006, Reference STB Finance Docket No. 34658, Alaska Railroad Corporation's Proposed Northern Rail Extension Project.

The Northern Rail Extension could support future joint training opportunities in Alaska, and we are working through the details. Preliminary studies show that a rail-vehicle bridge across the Tanana River to access the Tanana Flats Training Area (TFTA) and the Donnelly Training Area (DTA) would substantially enable increased use of the area for joint military training.

Alaskan Command is studying overall training requirements and the need to develop the TFTA and DTA as joint air and ground maneuver training areas. Due to the significant transformation and growth of the military in Alaska, additional analysis within the Air Force and the Army is required before we can provide quantifiable training area usage estimates.

Our initial review indicates that the capital investment necessary to develop training range infrastructure, including a bridge and additional access rights, would support enhanced operations in our existing large military training areas. BRAC direction will not reduce these training requirements. In fact, the ongoing Army Transformation increases the number of brigades stationed in Alaska and increases overall Army training requirements. In addition, the Air Force recently renamed its "COPE THUNDER" exercises to "RED FLAG Alaska." The intent of this change is to enhance the quality and level of joint and combined air exercises and training in Alaska. As a result, RED FLAG Alaska exercises will increase training requirements and range usage in the Pacific Alaska Range Complex. We are starting to define future training requirements to support RED FLAG Alaska.

Thank you for the opportunity to address these issues with you. Alaskan Command looks forward to continued participation in the EIS process in support of the Northern Rail Extension.

Sincerely

DOUGLAS M. FRASER
Lieutenant General, USAF
Commander